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ABSTRACT

A program evaluation was conducted of a summer program for academically gifted students in 5th through 10th grades. The purpose of this study was to evaluate discrepancies and congruencies among program teachers, counselors, and students in perceptions of program goal emphasis. The evaluation instrument used was a rating form composed of 60 goal statements developed to rate perceived degrees of emphasis placed by the program on cognitive and affective processes, student behaviors, and program environment. The subjects consisted of 16 teachers, 23 counselors, 294 students in grades 5-10, and 13 non-graded math students. Data analysis revealed that participants had generally congruent perceptions regarding the gifted program's goals. The program was generally perceived by teachers as being balanced, with similar emphases being given to affective, environment, behavior, and cognitive clusters of goals. Counselors and the 5th- through 10th-grade students perceived that program emphasis was less strong on the cognitive cluster of goals. It appeared that the evaluation instrument was sensitive enough to reveal explainable differences among groups. Coupled with its generally high internal consistency, there is confidence that the instrument produces reliable results. (JDD)

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Evaluation of a Summer Gifted Program: Perceptions of Program Goals

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Running Head: GIFTED PROGRAM EVALUATION

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Abstract

A program evaluation was conducted of a summer program for academically gifted students at a southeastern university to compare teacher, counselor, and student perceptions of emphasis placed by the program on categories of general goals. Results indicated that participants had generally congruent perceptions regarding the gifted program's goals. A unique approach for evaluating the goal understandings and acceptance for program counselors, teachers, and students is discussed.

Evaluation of a Summer Gifted Program: Perceptions of Program Goals

The process of conducting an evaluation of a gifted program has been described (Tuttle & Becker, 1983) as requiring a description of the program, an overview of goals and curriculum, a description of evaluation procedures, statements of results by category, and determinations of conclusions and recommendations. An evaluation process can be a powerful device for forcing a program to clarify goals (Dettmer, 1985). However, the process of goal formulation can be problematic. Patton (1978) stated that problems arise from the need to define program goals, due to the "written-in-stone" quality ascribed to formulated goals and the assumption that establishment of detailed goals may force a program into a static and rigid model. Patton suggested that it may be a "waste of time" to undertake the traditional first step in program evaluation involving staff construction of complex goals and objectives. He recommended that program evaluation be focused on the actual needs of the evaluated program rather than on an attempt to have staff prescribe program operation at the beginning of the evaluation process. Because the summer gifted program evaluated in this study was of short duration (four weeks) with staff on tight schedules, an

alternative method of goal formulation not using staff time was implemented. Goals for evaluation in this study were derived from available program information, and from the literature of gifted and talented education and program evaluation.

The purpose of this study was to evaluate discrepancies and congruencies between program teachers, counselors, and students in perceptions of program goal emphasis. Cognitive and affective processes, student behaviors, and program environment were used as structural framework in establishing goals for rating by the program participants.

METHOD

The subjects of this study consisted of nine groups: 16 teachers, 23 counselors, 22 fifth grade students, 52 sixth grade students, 53 seventh grade students, 60 eighth grade students, 65 ninth grade students, 42 tenth grade students, and 13 non-graded math students.

The evaluation instrument was administered to all parties separately and within two to four days of program completion.

Instrument

The evaluation instrument used was a rating form composed of 60 goal statements developed to rate perceived degrees of emphasis placed by the program on cognitive and affective

processes (based on taxonomies of educational objectives), student behaviors, and program environment (see Table 1). The cognitive category included 13 statements, the affective category included 9 statements, the behavior category included 11 statements, and the environment category included 15 statements. To protect against response set, 12 statements were included that expressed goals antithetical to an educational program for gifted students, which would be rated in directions opposite to goals in the other categories.

Insert Table 1 about here

The questionnaire was presented on one 8.5 by 14 inch page printed front and back. The order of goal statements on the rating form was randomized (The Rand Corporation, 1955) with a five-point Likert scale used for response format (SA circled if the participant strongly agreed, A if the participant agreed, ? if the participant was undecided or didn't know, D if the participant disagreed, and SD if the participant strongly disagreed).

Measures of reliability and validity did not exist for this instrument because it was specifically constructed for this

project. However, the use of generally stated goals as determined from program information, and the needs and preferences of gifted children as expressed in the literature of gifted and talented education in construction of the rating instrument operated to provide face and content validity. To obtain a measure of internal consistency, a reliability analysis using Chronbach's Coefficient Alpha was conducted on the instrument.

RESULTS

A one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) performed on the categorical clusters of goal statements by group revealed significant differences ($p < .01$) between groups on the cognitive, affective, and environment goal categories. Analysis of group data by goal category revealed that the program was generally perceived by teachers as being balanced, with similar emphases being given to affective, environment, behavior, and cognitive clusters of goals. All groups except teachers and the non-graded math group indicated a slight trend toward perception of program emphasis placed less strongly on the cognitive cluster of goals by the program (see Table 2). Category means varied according to the number of items in each

category, therefore means were adjusted to 1 item scale to provide a consistent representation of group data across categories.

Insert Table 2 about here

Analysis of internal consistency of the instrument by total participants revealed coefficients ranging from .75 for the environment category to .82 for the cognitive category. Cognitive, affective, behavior, and environment categories combined for total participants resulted in a reliability coefficient of .93. Reliability analysis of the instrument by group revealed results similar to the analysis by total participants (see Table 3).

Insert Table 3 about here

DISCUSSION

The focus of this study was on the determination of congruencies and discrepancies between teachers, counselors, and students in perceptions of emphasis placed by the summer gifted program on categories of general goals. Results indicated that program participants had relatively congruent perceptions

regarding cognitive, affective, behavior, and environment goal categories. The program appeared to have effectively conveyed a coherent impression of its goals to participants in the general categories assessed in this study. Teachers appeared to be more accurate than all other groups in perceiving program goals to be as described in the summer program's literature and in the literature of gifted and talented education. The accuracy of perception of teachers may be attributed to their training and experience in working with gifted students, and in that respect, to their familiarity with the general goals of gifted education.

It appeared that the evaluation instrument was sensitive enough to reveal explainable differences between groups. Differences obtained between teachers and counselors on the cognitive category of goal statements, and differences between ninth and tenth grade students on the affective category of goal statements represented variations in the program. The post hoc findings that explainable differences could be revealed by the instrument, coupled with its generally high internal consistency, gave confidence that the instrument produced reliable results. Other gifted programs may find the enclosed evaluation instrument a useful addition to their evaluation methodology.

In summary, this article provides a unique approach for evaluating the goal understandings and acceptance of a gifted program for program counselors, teachers, and students. Further research is necessary to determine the applicability of the evaluation instrument to other gifted programs.

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Table 1.

Items on Program Evaluation Instrument.

The program emphasizes:		
1.	Having easy access to different materials and equipment.	SA A ? D SD
2.	Understanding relationships between parts of information.	SA A ? D SD
3.	Developing a sense of responsibility.	SA A ? D SD
4.	Being dependent on others.	SA A ? D SD
5.	Using only one method of teaching and learning.	SA A ? D SD
6.	Using practice exercises and worksheets.	SA A ? D SD
7.	Developing one's own personal values.	SA A ? D SD
8.	Developing reading abilities and skills.	SA A ? D SD
9.	Having freedom to choose different methods of study.	SA A ? D SD
10.	Developing self-motivation.	SA A ? D SD
11.	Developing artistic or creative abilities and skills.	SA A ? D SD

Table 1 (cont.).

12.	Using principles or theories in solving problems.	SA A ? D SD
13.	Using comparisons and contrasts in judging information.	SA A ? D SD
14.	Drawing conclusions from information.	SA A ? D SD
15.	Memorizing facts and details.	SA A ? D SD
16.	Using independent study as a teaching-learning method.	SA A ? D SD
17.	Developing friendships with others.	SA A ? D SD
18.	Learning in a rigid and strictly controlled environment.	SA A ? D SD
19.	Using discussion as a teaching-learning method.	SA A ? D SD
20.	Recognizing categories and classifications.	SA A ? D SD
21.	Being involved in new experiences.	SA A ? D SD
22.	Developing planning abilities and skills.	SA A ? D SD
23.	Developing a code of behavior or philosophy of life.	SA A ? D SD

Table 1 (cont.).

24.	Studying topics that are covered in regular school.	SA A ? D SD
25.	Having freedom to choose different topics of study.	SA A ? D SD
26.	Understanding cause and effect relationships.	SA A ? D SD
27.	Using a variety of materials and references.	SA A ? D SD
28.	Using grades as a motivation for learning.	SA A ? D SD
29.	Developing leadership abilities and skills.	SA A ? D SD
30.	Using discovery or inquiry methods in solving problems.	SA A ? D SD
31.	Producing original products or works.	SA A ? D SD
32.	Understanding one's own strengths and weaknesses.	SA A ? D SD
33.	Learning of vocabulary and terminology.	SA A ? D SD
34.	Achieving perfection in products or works.	SA A ? D SD
35.	Seeing individual differences among people.	SA A ? D SD
36.	Developing group participation skills.	SA A ? D SD
37.	Developing prejudices toward others.	SA A ? D SD

Table 1 (cont.).

38.	Evaluating products or works by other students.	SA A ? D SD
39.	Making impulsive judgements about information.	SA A ? D SD
40.	Following rules and regulations.	SA A ? D SD
41.	Developing physical abilities and skills.	SA A ? D SD
42.	Developing speaking abilities and skills.	SA A ? D SD
43.	Presenting products and works to real audiences.	SA A ? D SD
44.	Using projects as a teaching-learning method.	SA A ? D SD
45.	Having fun while learning.	SA A ? D SD
46.	Being willing to revise opinions with new information.	SA A ? D SD
47.	Formulating and testing hypotheses.	SA A ? D SD
48.	Using logic in making judgements about information.	SA A ? D SD
49.	Developing writing abilities and skills.	SA A ? D SD
50.	Explaining or summarizing information.	SA A ? D SD

Table 1 (cont.).

51.	Developing listening abilities and skills.	SA A ? D SD
52.	Developing skills of observation.	SA A ? D SD
53.	Self-evaluating one's own products or works.	SA A ? D SD
54.	Comparing different value systems.	SA A ? D SD
55.	Using free time for positive purposes.	SA A ? D SD
56.	Studying simple ideas and easy problems.	SA A ? D SD
57.	Using lecture as a teaching-learning method.	SA A ? D SD
58.	Exploring the local environment and resources.	SA A ? D SD
59.	Developing self-confidence.	SA A ? D SD
60.	Developing independence in solving problems.	SA A ? D SD

Table 2.

Group Mean Scores by Category Adjusted to Item Scale

Group	Cog		Aff		Beh		Env	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Teachers	1.78	.45	1.71	.62	1.79	.56	1.75	.47
Counselors	2.46	.52	1.85	.46	2.14	.45	2.10	.42
Fifth	2.22	.36	1.97	.42	1.94	.66	1.93	.43
Sixth	2.06	.39	1.71	.38	1.92	.48	1.72	.38
Seventh	2.10	.52	1.73	.47	1.84	.48	1.89	.44
Eighth	2.07	.46	1.81	.47	1.96	.50	1.86	.36
Ninth	1.97	.49	1.59	.42	1.79	.42	1.79	.39
Tenth	2.30	.41	1.96	.51	2.09	.57	1.96	.31
Non-graded	2.06	.39	1.91	.36	2.08	.40	2.04	.40

Note. Item Scale: 1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Uncertain or Don't Know, 4 = Disagree, 5 = Strongly Disagree.

Table 3.

Reliability Coefficients of Instrument by Group and Category

Group	Cog Alpha	Aff Alpha	Beh Alpha	Env Alpha	Tot Alpha
Teachers	.86	.87	.90	.89	.97
Counselors	.92	.90	.84	.85	.96
Fifth	.67	.62	.87	.70	.92
Sixth	.68	.61	.71	.70	.89
Seventh	.85	.82	.78	.80	.94
Eighth	.82	.78	.79	.74	.92
Ninth	.88	.80	.79	.79	.94
Tenth	.78	.76	.84	.57	.91
Non-graded	.79	.39	.71	.76	.91
All	.87	.77	.80	.75	.93

Note. All = All program participants.

Note. Tot = Summation of Cog, Aff, Beh, Env.